CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Please cancel Claims 7 and 8, amend Claims 1, 4-6, and add new Claims 9-12 to the application as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An exposure deciding method for deciding laser exposure when image formation is performed by an electrophotographic process, comprising:

an expansion step of expanding image data at a resolution higher ~~that~~ than an actual resolution of an output apparatus;

a resolution conversion step of subjecting high-resolution data, which is the result of expansion at said expansion step, to a resolution conversion to the actual resolution of the output apparatus, by a prescribed low-resolution conversion method; and

~~an exposure decision step of deciding laser exposure when image formation is performed in such a manner that density of prescribed image data will be the same before and after image formation; and~~

an image formation step of forming an image represented by image data, which has undergone the resolution conversion performed at said resolution conversion step, based upon the laser exposure ~~that has been decided at said exposure decision step~~ set in such a manner that density of image data will be the same before and after the resolution conversion performed by the prescribed low-resolution conversion.

2. (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said resolution conversion step includes averaging the high-resolution data using a matrix of a predetermined size and subjecting the actual resolution of the output apparatus to a resolution conversion.

3. (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said resolution conversion step includes averaging the high-resolution data using a matrix in which boxes of a matrix of a predetermined size have been shifted by one-half pixel.

4. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein ~~said exposure decision step includes forming~~ a prescribed pattern is formed that will take on a different image formation state by the prescribed low-resolution conversion method despite the fact that an original image pattern is the same, ~~originally, measuring~~ the density of the prescribed pattern ~~formed~~ is measured, and ~~deciding~~ the laser exposure is determined in such a manner that the density of the prescribed pattern will be the same before and after image formation.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein ~~said exposure decision step includes forming~~ a prescribed pattern is formed that is repeated at fixed intervals, ~~measuring~~ the density of the prescribed pattern ~~formed~~ is measured, and ~~deciding~~ the laser exposure is determined based upon the ~~result of measurement~~ measured density in such a manner that a difference in average density will not develop between the prescribed patterns.

6. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus for deciding laser exposure when image formation is performed by an electrophotographic process, comprising:

an expansion ~~means for~~ unit adapted to ~~expanding~~ expand image data at a resolution higher ~~that~~ than an actual resolution of an output apparatus;

a resolution conversion ~~means for~~ unit adapted to ~~subjecting~~ subject high-resolution data, which is the result of expansion by said expansion ~~means~~ unit to a

resolution conversion to the actual resolution of the output apparatus, by a prescribed low-resolution conversion method; and

~~exposure decision means for deciding laser exposure when image formation is performed in such a manner that density of prescribed image data woo be the same before and after image formation; and~~

an image formation ~~means~~ unit adapted to ~~forming~~ form an image represented by image data, which has undergone the resolution conversion performed by said resolution conversion ~~means~~ unit, based upon the laser exposure ~~that has been decided by said exposure decision means~~ set in such a manner that density of image data will be the same before and after the resolution conversion performed by the prescribed low-resolution conversion.

7.-8. (Cancelled)

9. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said resolution conversion unit averages the high-resolution data using a matrix of a predetermined size and subjects the actual resolution of the output apparatus to a resolution conversion.

10. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said resolution conversion unit averages the high-resolution data using a matrix in which boxes of a matrix of a predetermined size have been shifted by one-half pixel.

11. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that will take on a different image formation state by the prescribed low-resolution conversion method despite the fact that an original image pattern is the same, the density of the prescribed pattern formed is measured, and the laser exposure is determined

in such a manner that the density of the prescribed pattern will be the same before and after image formation.

12. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that is repeated at fixed intervals, the density of the prescribed pattern is measured, and the laser exposure is determined based on the measured density in such a manner that a difference in average density will not develop between the prescribed patterns.